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SIX MOVIES UNWRAPPING ON CHRISTMAS

METRO OFFERS A 'NICE' LIST OF NON-TURKEYS TO CHECK OUT ON DEC. 25 AFTER THE DAY'S TURKEY IS DONE PAGE 19

Unlucky would-be thief runs into a Barberian at the gate

Video showing local restaurant owner Arron Barberian going 'Tie Domi' on a man during an attempted robbery hits YouTube PAGE 4

Metro wishes you a safe and happy holiday, Toronto!

We're taking Christmas off, but be sure to pick up our special Boxing Day edition, featuring a special look ahead at 2015

Unaware they're poor in Toronto

Hidden Epidemic. We have the highest rate of child poverty among Canada's largest cities, but those affected can be difficult to identify

GILBERT NGABO
gilbert.ngabo@metronews.ca

Amina Danlami, 13, in her Grade 8 classroom at Fairmount school in Scarborough. DAVID VAN DYKE/METRO

They are children just like others.

They go to school and many perform well. They love to play. They laugh, a lot.

Their families work hard, sometimes at multiple jobs, to provide for them.

What's less obvious is that many of them — 146,000 in Toronto — are living in poverty, a fact that's often lost even on them.

"I haven't seen anyone that's poor here, only back home in Nigeria," 13 year-old Amina Danlami of Scarborough, whose family of six relies on social assistance, told Metro.

The numbers aren't pretty. The economic capital of the country has the highest child poverty rate among large Canadian cities, and the trend is on the rise, according to a recent report from a coalition of children and youth advocates.

Since about 29 per cent of children in the city are poor, it's inevitable that people are unknowingly brushing shoulders with them on the subway or street corners, said Anita Khanna, one of the report's authors.

She and others behind the report, dubbed The Hidden Epidemic, were "startled" to see the increasing number of poor families in a city that, earlier this year, was ranked 15th in the world for its concentration of millionaires.

"It really shows how unequal the city has become," added Khanna, who works with Family Service Toronto.

The report notes that Torontonians of African, Middle Eastern, Asian and Latin American backgrounds are 1-1/2 to three times more likely to be living on low incomes when compared to people of British or European descent.

The impact poverty has on children, ranging from compromised nutrition to education, can haunt them for generations to come, Khanna said.

And many people will never truly see what they experience.

"We just can't pick them out and differentiate them from the rest," Khanna said.

"These are just like any other kids, except that they'll go home and not have access to extra curricular activities and support other children have."

Meet Amina Danlami, one of the faces of childhood poverty, on page 6, and get another take on the epidemic on Voices, page 11.

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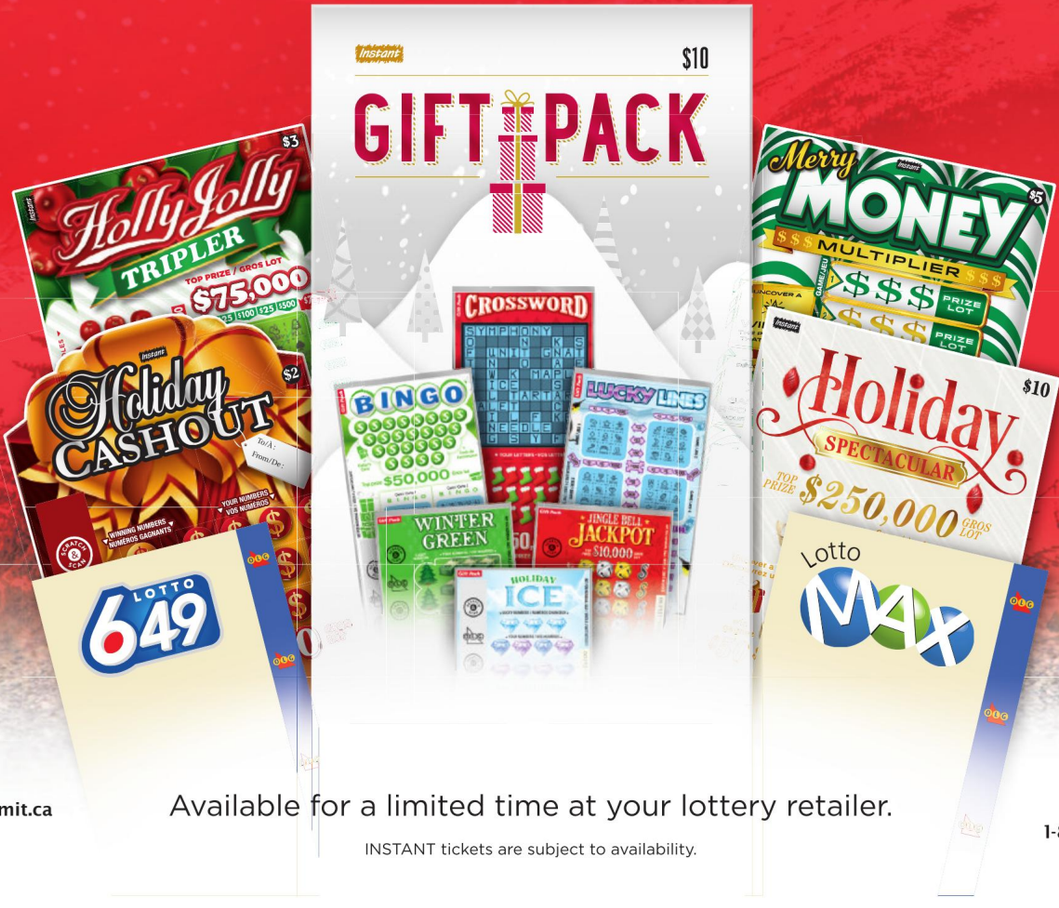

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Delivery service helps keep last-minute shoppers sane

Christmas rush.
Toronto courier Hurrier helping people short on time, patience

ROSEMARY WESTWOOD
rosemary.westwood@metronews.ca

Hurrier courier Søren Folke Bailik is one of the bolstered courier ranks on Toronto streets to keep up with demand as Christmas Day looms. DAVID VAN DYKE/METRO

Delivery deadlines for many of the biggest retailers have come and gone — but last-minute holiday shoppers have a last-minute ally in Hurrier.

The Toronto delivery service will buy anything in the city and deliver to you within an hour — even if that means going to the mall.

The company has seen a 40 per cent delivery jump in recent days, said founder Adam Hasham, and couriers have been tasked with grabbing everything from makeup to macaroons, Hasham said.

"Things are getting really busy and really crazy," he said. "There's a huge surge."

Hot spots have included: "Shoppers Drug Mart for holiday packaging, things from Canadian Tire, things from the mall, or Sephora, and other boutique shops, especially across Queen Street," Hasham said.

Hurrier, launched last year, generally does a swift business picking up and delivering takeout. But shoppers can also use the "deliver anything" option to get, well, anything delivered within the company's boundaries of roughly Dupont Street, Keele Street, Coxwell Avenue and the waterfront.

People use the Hurrier website to enter a description of an item, where it's sold and where it needs to be delivered. They are then billed for the cost of the item and the delivery fee.

At a glance

- The Hurrier elves will be riding through 9:30 p.m. on Christmas Eve.
- Amazon is offering same-day delivery on Christmas Eve for orders made before noon.
- Canada Post's deadline for Priority shipped packages was Tuesday.

Call for more subway stations criticized

LUKE SIMCOE
Metro Online

Toronto Coun. Glenn De Baeremaeker is being accused of plotting "an end run around taxpayers" after asking for more stations to be built along the Scarborough subway.

The city has started an environmental assessment of the $3.5-billion project, and hopes to unveil the final alignment by fall. De Baeremaeker wants those conducting the assessment to consider a fourth stop near Danforth Road and Eglinton Avenue, which would add an estimated $150 million to the price tag.

"We should have more stations. When you look at Kennedy to the next station that's approved, it's about four kilometres," he said. "If that was downtown, along the Bloor line, there'd be 800 metres between stations."

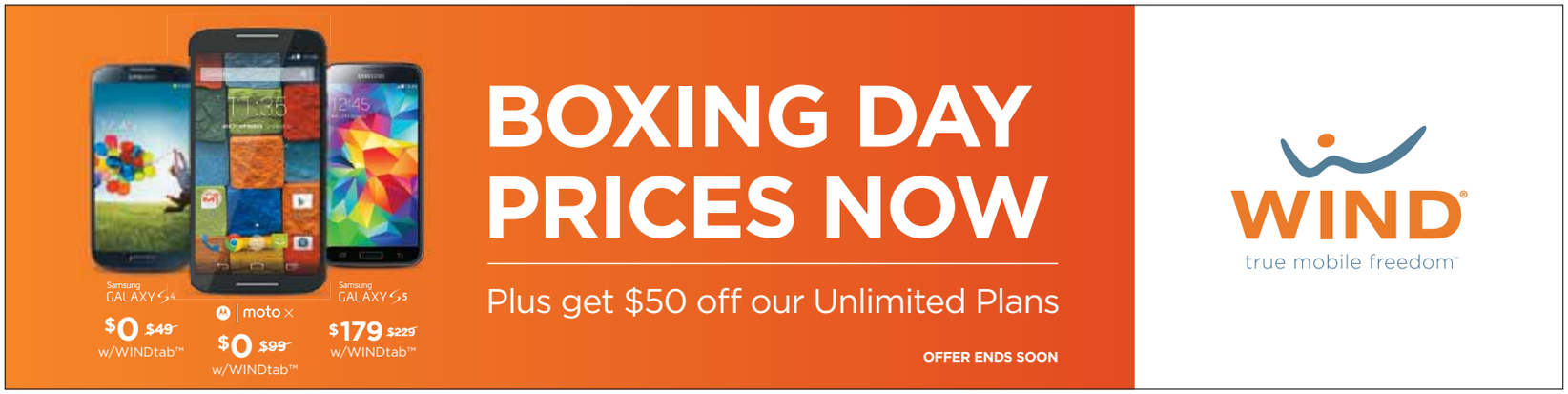
De Baeremaeker was among those who pushed council to abandon the fully funded Scarborough LRT, which included seven stations, in favour of the three-stop subway.

"To get out there and ask for another station after everything is agreed to is spitting in the face of taxpayers," said J.P. Boutros, who served as policy adviser to former TTC chairwoman Karen Stintz. "It insults voters who have said they just don't want to talk about this anymore."

Boutros said that if De Baeremaeker wanted more stations he shouldn't have opposed the LRT.

"It's hypocritical," he said. "We should either let this die and proceed with the plan, or we really need to reopen the debate around the LRT."

Coun. Glenn De Baeremaeker
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE



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Glasgow

Ex-Scarborough couple, grandkid killed by truck

A former Scarborough couple and their teenage granddaughter were killed in Glasgow by an out-of-control truck. A city truck careened onto the sidewalk, striking a number of pedestrians, killing six and injuring 10. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

The holidays

What's open/closed

Here's what's open and what's not over the holidays:

Christmas Eve

•LCBO stores are open until 6 p.m.

•Most malls — including the Eaton Centre, Yorkdale Mall and Vaughan Mills — will be open until 6 p.m.

•Select branches of the Toronto Public Library will be open until 1 p.m.

•TTC and GO Transit are running on their regular schedules

Christmas Day

•All government offices, banks, post offices, public libraries and grocery stores will be closed.

•All shopping malls will be closed except Pacific Mall, which will be open from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

•The Beer Store and the LCBO will be closed.

•TTC and GO Transit will be operating on their Sunday schedule.

Boxing Day

•Government offices, banks, post offices, public libraries and most grocery stores will remain closed for Boxing Day.

•The Eaton Centre and Vaughan Mills will be open at 7 a.m. Most other shopping centres will open around 8 a.m.

•TTC and GO Transit will be operating on their Saturday schedule. METRO

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ROGERS™

Arron Barberian, owner of Barberian's Steak House, wrestles with a man who tried to rob him as he walked along Elm Street with a cash drawer full of money.
YOUTUBE SCREENSHOT

Assailant gets 'smack down'

Barberian's owner. Restaurateur takes on would-be mugger in videos now posted to social media

This mugger isn't a Jays fan.

Otherwise, he might have recognized the grey-haired restaurant owner Monday morning and thought twice about trying to rob him as he walked down the street with a full cash box.

Arron Barberian, current proprietor of Barberian's Steakhouse and TLP near Yonge and Gerrard, became something of an Internet sensation when he caught a bat that flew into the stands at the Blue Jays' 2013 home opener. With a wild look in his eye, he cocked the bat threateningly, seemingly willing to take on the entire Cleveland Indians bench all by himself.

This is not a man you would want to rob, especially unarmed.

"People react in different ways," said Barberian. "I went berserk."

Barberian's altercation with the mugger was captured by his restaurant's two security cameras. In the videos, a man jogs up behind Barberian and confronts him at the restaurant's door.

"He was kind of singing. He wasn't a menacing guy … when he stopped me and grabbed the till, I looked down and he had money in his hands — no weapon. If he had had a gun, I would have thrown my hands up," he said.

"Instead, I went 'Tie Domi' on him."

On the video, Barberian pulls the man's hoodie up over his head and drags him out onto the sidewalk.

The two men grapple and swing around several times before it becomes clear that the tides have turned and the attacker is now trying to get away, while Barberian — aided by an employee on his phone with the police — tries to keep him from fleeing.

"I didn't want to punch him," he said. "I just wanted to make him sit down and wait for the cops to come."

Barberian plays cat-and-mouse with the attacker, who eventually flees into the nearby Ryerson parking garage before police can arrive.

The videos have been posted to YouTube, titled Smack Down and Smack Down 2.

Barberians Steakhouse's Twitter account advertised the incident, writing "This is why you don't mess with the Boss!!! El Hefe Arron Barberian gave a wanna-be-robber the gears this morning."

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UHD Dimming - 960CMR - Smart TV - Quad Core

UHD 55" - UN55HU7250 ~~$1499~~

SAMSUNG Series HU8550

UHD Dimming - 1200CMR - Smart TV - Quad Core

UHD 50" - UN50HU8550 ~~$1199~~

UHD 55" - UN55HU8550 ~~$1999~~

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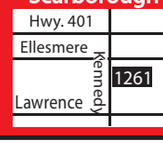

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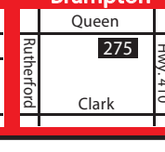

AMINA DANLAMI

13-year-old sets eyes on helping others as she battles poverty, tackles challenges head on

‘I LIKE TO BE ABLE TO SOLVE PROBLEMS’

Amina Danlami, 13, moved to Canada with her family in July 2013. She’s one of the many children living in poverty in Toronto. DAVID VAN DYKE/METRO

GILBERT NGABO
gilbert.ngabo@metronews.ca

Math is a favourite subject for 13-year-old Amina Danlami — and it’s for an atypical reason.

“I like to be able to solve problems, and math has different ways of getting to solutions,” says Danlami, a Grade 8 student at Fairmount Public School in Scarborough. “I like to separate fights, get people out of problems because it’s not good.”

Problems are something she knows a lot about.

The second child in a family of five, her mother brought them to Canada in July 2013 from Lagos, Nigeria.

As part of the community housing arrangement, they lived in Roycroft Motel near Kingston Road for months, relying on assistance for everything from food to winter clothing and school materials.

She is one of the many Torontonians represented in a recent child and family poverty report. According to the report, poverty is on the rise in the city and there are neighbourhoods where a majority of children are struggling to get by.

Quoted

“I want to get involved, go places, help build schools and hospitals, donate money or food.”
Amina Danlami

The report notes that poverty affects families in different ways, from inadequate nutrition to lack of access to education, proper housing and recreational activities.

Danlami’s family now lives in a subsidized three-bedroom apartment in Scarborough. Her mother is unemployed, so they still rely on social assistance.

Even at her young age, she’s learned to take care of her younger siblings. Every day after school, she has to strike a balance between preparing their snacks, bathing them, changing their clothes and doing her homework. Her mother, meanwhile, goes out looking for the family’s daily bread — which comes mainly from food banks.

Against all odds, Danlami has persisted, maintaining good grades in all subjects. And she has found ways to help those in need through various initiatives.

She is a member of the Girls Club at school, is part of a leadership skills camp, and is leading a school initiative to collect pyjamas and donate them to homeless people in January.

“I want to get involved, go places, help build schools and hospitals, donate money or food,” she says.

She has also done some public speaking, talking about bouncing back and overcoming adversity, drawing inspiration from her life journey.

When she gets older, Danlami — a fan of indie music and action movies — would like to be a nurse.

“Nurses save lives and help bring lives to the world,” she says. “They are inspirational.”

For Christmas, Danlami hopes to wear a festive outfit — like a red or white dress — and go out for a meal with her family.

The restaurant of her choice? McDonald’s, though she fears her mother won’t approve.

For more on child poverty in Canada, see page 11

How to help

Toronto children facing poverty

The following agencies are just some of the many offering help to Toronto children facing poverty:

- **Free the Children**
  Aims to help young people achieve their full potential as agents of change. Free the Children has established operations in Ecuador, Ghana, Haiti, India, Nicaragua, Kenya, rural China and Sierra Leone. More info: freethechildren.com/donate; 416-925-5894, Ext. 112

- **Children’s Aid Society**
  Works to protect children from neglect and prevent situations that may lead to child abuse. More info: torontocas.ca;416-924-4640

- **Save the Children Canada**
  Focuses on raising money and operating programs to address issues of child protection, child rights, health and nutrition, education and HIV/AIDS. More info: savethechildren.ca; 800-668-5036

- **Children’s Aid Foundation**
  Helps vulnerable kids across Canada to overcome the obstacles in life that hold them back. More info: cafdn.org/donate; 416-923-0923, Ext. 261

By the numbers

29%

Toronto children living in low-income families
- Highest rate in GTHA and tied with Saint John, N.B., for the highest rate among 13 major Canadian cities.
- Rate has held relatively steady since 1997

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

21.5%

of children younger than 14 who rely on food banks go hungry at least one or two days a week, an increase of 2.7 percentage points from 2007

15

Number of Toronto neighbourhoods with child poverty rates of 40% or more.
- Rate lowest, at or below 5%, in: Lawrence Park North and South; Leaside-Bennington; Kingsway South
- Rate highest, at or above 50%, in: Regent Park; Moss Park; Thorncliffe Park; Oakridge

ISTOCK

$30K

48% of black children and 56% of Middle Eastern children (junior kindergarten to Grade 6) live in families with incomes of less than $30,000 per year.

Source: The Hidden Epidemic report

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Magnotta guilty of murder, jury finds

Life imprisonment. Luka Rocco Magnotta also convicted of four other non-murder charges

Luka Rocco Magnotta remained impassive as one of the 12 jurors who deliberated his fate uttered the word "guilty" to all five charges against him in the slaying and dismemberment of Jun Lin, including first-degree murder.

Magnotta was later sentenced to life imprisonment on the murder charge, with no chance of applying for parole for 25 years.

On the four non-murder charges, the native of Scarborough, Ont., was given the maximum terms allowed under the Criminal Code, ranging from two to 10 years. The sentences are concurrent.

His lawyer, Luc Leclair, told reporters his client was "disappointed" but "relieved."

Impact statement

"I had come to learn what happened to my son that night and I leave without a true or a complete answer. I had come to see remorse, to hear some form of apology, and I leave without anything."

Daniel Urbas reading an impact statement from Diran Lin, father of Jun Lin

Crown prosecutor Louis Bouthillier said he was fully expecting the jury to deliver the five guilty verdicts.

After the verdicts, a lawyer read out an impact statement on behalf of Lin's father, Diran Lin, who watched proceedings throughout the trial from a private room in the courthouse.

"I had come to see your trial system to see justice done and I leave satisfied that you have not let my son down," Daniel Urbas told the emotionally charged room.

The other charges Magnotta was convicted of were criminally harassing Prime Minister Stephen Harper and other members of Parliament; mailing obscene and indecent material; committing an indignity to a body; and publishing obscene materials.

Magnotta was seeking to be found not criminally responsible in the May 2012 slaying by way of mental disorder, with experts testifying he was in a psychotic state the night of the killing and couldn't tell right from wrong.

The Crown countered the crime was both planned and deliberate and that Magnotta's behaviour and actions went against someone supposedly suffering from a disease of the mind.

As Magnotta had admitted to the physical acts, the jury's task was to determine his state of mind at the time.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Marking a century since Christmas truce

The Parliament Buildings in Ottawa are shown with Christmas lights on Monday. Dr. Andrea McCrady, who is the Dominion Carillonneur, will be among 11 countries' carillonneurs playing Silent Night on Dec. 24 to mark the 100th anniversary of the Christmas truce during the First World War. FRED CHARTRAND/THE CANADIAN PRESS

U.S. might lift ban on gay blood donors

31-year-old policy.
FDA favours new rule barring donations from men who have had gay sex in the previous year

U.S. health officials are recommending an end to America's lifetime ban on blood donations from gay and bisexual men, a 31-year-old policy that many medical groups and gay activists say is no longer justified.

The Food and Drug Administration said Tuesday it favours replacing the blanket ban with a new policy barring donations from men who have had gay sex in the previous year. FDA officials said that policy is supported by research and would put the U.S. in line with other countries including Australia, Japan and Britain.

The lifetime ban dates from the early years of the AIDS crisis and was intended to protect the blood supply from what was a then little-understood disease. But many medical groups, including the American Medical Association, say the policy is no longer supported by science, given advances in HIV testing. Gay activists say the lifetime ban is discriminatory and perpetuates negative stereotypes of homosexual men.

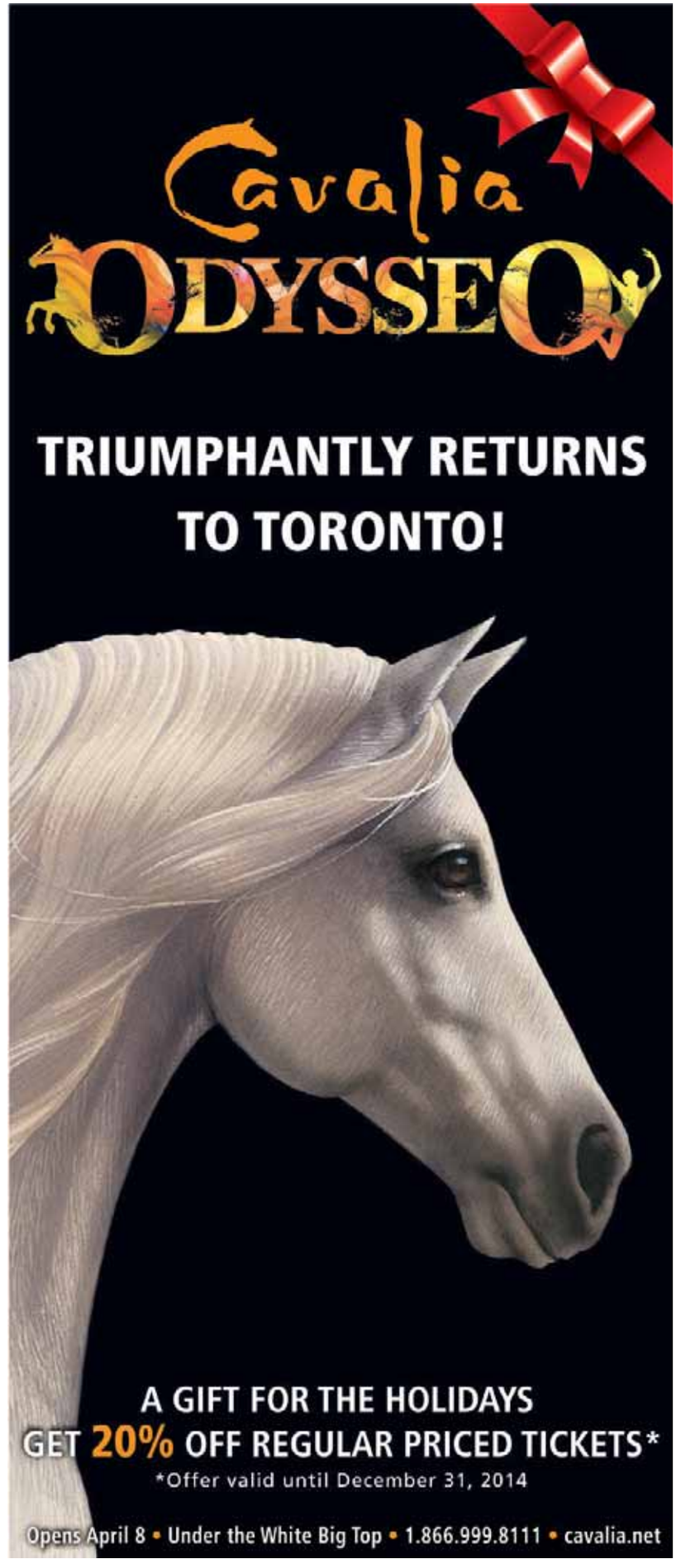
The agency will recommend the switch in draft guidelines early next year and move to finalize them after taking comments from the public, said FDA officials. FDA Deputy Director Dr. Peter Parks declined to give a time frame for completing the process but said, "we commit to working as quickly as possible on this issue."

All blood donations are screened for HIV; however, the test only detects the virus after it's been in the bloodstream about 10 days. That allows a brief window when the virus that causes AIDS can go undetected. According to government figures, men who have had sex with other men represent about two per cent of the U.S. population, yet account for at least 62 per cent of all new HIV infections in the U.S.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Interview release back on for Xmas

A large poster advertising the movie The Interview hangs on the back wall of the Alamo Drafthouse Cinema Tuesday in Houston. Sony Pictures Entertainment announced Tuesday a limited theatrical release of The Interview in the U.S. beginning Thursday, putting back into the theatres the comedy that prompted an international incident with North Korea and outrage over its cancelled release. PAT SULLIVAN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Experts betting on Boxing Day sales

Black Friday's effects. Despite deals in November, Canadians still expected to seek post-Christmas sales

Boxing Day has traditionally been a bonanza for bargain hunters, but will earlier Black Friday promotions put a dent in post-Christmas sales in Canada?

Ian Lee, assistant professor with the Sprott School of Business at Ottawa's Carleton University, said while the Black Friday phenomenon has extended the holiday shopping season until the week of Boxing Day, it is not generating net new sales.

"As they introduce and extend these sales, people become more cynical … I think consumers understand intuitively the Boxing Day week sales are going to be better deals," he said.

Some retailers are already getting a jump on offering end-of-year bargains. Amazon.ca announced plans to feature new Boxing Day deals daily beginning Tuesday until Dec. 29, while Best Buy will launch its Boxing Day sale online on Christmas Eve.

Adrienne Down Coulson, general manager of cash-back shopping site Ebates.ca, said while participating in Black Friday and Cyber Monday promotions is "much less optional" for Canadian companies today, she doesn't foresee a huge effect on Boxing Day.

"Boxing Day is still one of the biggest shopping days, if not *the* biggest shopping day, in Canada. So as a retailer, they've got to be aggressive if they're going to compete," she said.

Boxing Day was traditionally driven by retailers seeking to clear out leftover inventories to make way for winter merchandise, noted David Soberman, professor of marketing at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Shopping plans

An online survey commissioned by cash-back shopping site Ebates.ca found that about 40 per cent of Canadians plan to shop on Boxing Day.

- Most shoppers were planning to buy clothing (69 per cent) followed by electronics (63 per cent), said general manager Adrienne Down Coulson.
- When the same question was posed about Black Friday and Cyber Monday in November, the categories were reversed.

Gifts of Christmas past

Collector Dianne Adcock carries out three Cabbage Patch Kids from around 1980 after they received a bath at Babyland General Hospital, the birthplace of Cabbage Patch Kids, in Cleveland, Ga. Thirty years after they sparked a frenzy, Cabbage Patch Kids still have avid fans. Newer hand-stitched dolls start at about $225 US, but dolls dating to before the mass-market frenzy can sell for tens of thousands of dollars. DAVID GOLDMAN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Potentially lethal

FDA sounds off on caffeine powder

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is building a legal case against companies that sell pure powdered caffeine after the death of an Ohio teen. Even a teaspoon can be lethal — it is equivalent to 25 cups of coffee. Some teenagers are drawn to the powder for its perceived energy boost.

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VOICES

TIME TO END CHILD POVERTY

Activist brothers Craig and Marc Kielburger explain that while Canada is a more prosperous country now than ever before, poverty levels have also never been higher

The number of Canadian children who depend on food banks every month could fill 6,200 school buses. And we would need a line of buses stretching almost 300 kilometres long for all the children in this country who live in poverty. Those are staggering figures in a country as wealthy as ours.

Every child on those buses has a different story. There's a boy whose single mother works two jobs, struggling just to pay the bills in East Vancouver. A child of an immigrant family in Toronto's Regent Park, who came here with nothing. A girl on the Attawapiskat First Nations reserve in northern Ontario, living in a tiny house with no heat or clean water, and who only just got a proper school this year.

The rate of child poverty in Canada has increased since 1989 when our federal government voted unanimously to wipe it out by 2000. Twenty-five years later, more than 1.3 million Canadian children live below the poverty line.

The number of Canadians who rely on food banks grows every year. Almost 100 First Nations communities face drinking water advisories, and as many as 48 communities still lack a school. In the north, we've seen three families crammed into a small house, sleeping shoulder to shoulder on the floor. The same is often true of new immigrant families who arrive in our urban centres and share tiny apartments.

Our country has seen extraordinary economic growth, and at the same time deepening inequality.

If we believe every Canadian child deserves the same fair chance to thrive, we need to ask how we give them that.

From Ecuador to India, in our international work we find that fighting child poverty is mostly about meeting families' most basic needs like food, clean water and education. Those challenges exist here. But in Canada, the problem is more complex than simply building a school, or putting food on the table.

In part, it's about empowering people to change their own lives.

Given the opportunity and the tools, young Canadians in low-income communities have an incredible capacity to make positive change — for themselves, their families and their neighbours. We've learned that working with youth in urban neighbourhoods like Toronto's Regent Park, and with aboriginal youth in our Sacred Circle program. When young Canadians in these communities take on a service project — tackling issues like drug abuse or youth suicide — in the process of helping others they help themselves. Still, as Canadians we need to ask ourselves, what kind of country do we want to live in? Do we want a Canada where every child has the opportunity to succeed? If so, it's time to come up with a plan that will fulfil the promise we made 25 years ago to end child poverty.

Brothers Craig and Marc Kielburger founded a platform for social change that includes the international charity Free The Children, the social enterprise Me to We and the youth empowerment movement We Day.

We asked you:

What's the nicest thing a stranger has ever done for you?*

Just in time for Christmas, we asked people from around the country to share their stories of random acts of kindness:

Andrea Juby, Vancouver

While I was looking for a new apartment this fall, my current building manager — who was a stranger to me at the time — offered to hold a beautiful light-filled studio for a whole month until I was ready to move in. She said, "We don't want to bankrupt you before Christmas!" I walked away on air, I was so moved. That immense kindness created a real sense of home for me. I am so grateful to her and I look forward to my opportunity to pay that kindness forward.

Ena Goquiolay, Calgary

When my family and I migrated to Canada in 2001, we didn't know anybody. A newly immigrated Filipino family, who my parents only knew by referral from mutual friends back home, picked us up from the airport and offered us a room in their small apartment until my parents could find a basement to rent. They drove us to government offices and garage sales. Their kids lent us their toys and showed us around the neighbourhood. Fourteen years later, we consider these once strangers part of our family.

Brittney Skrypec, Winnipeg

I went to (a coffee shop) to get gift cards for work, and the barista asked me if I was getting anything. I said no and she told me not to worry about it. "It's on us," she said. I'm glad I got it for free, it was so nice of her! Now every time I see her, I think of that time she made my day.

Renata Tracy, Toronto *

Someone — their name was Aris — once rode their bike from Montreal to Toronto to see me for one day.

Editor's note: Aris was not a stranger to Renata. That probably would have been creepy. There was a misunderstanding in Toronto about which question to ask, but this answer was so nice we thought we'd use it anyway :)

Stephen Freedman, Ottawa

I asked a stranger for help once when my phone died. He was kind enough to let me use my phone to call my mom. She was supposed to pick me up and I was supposed to tell her where. I was downtown. There would have been a lot of confusion if I didn't call.

Qian Giang, Halifax

I crossed Spring Garden and just lost my (wallet) and another person helped me pick up my (wallet) and return to me.

metro

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Gossip

NED EHRBAR

METRO'S TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Amy Adams GETTY IMAGES

Amy Adams on the outs with Today over Sony scandal

It was just supposed to be a simple morning talk-show appearance for Amy Adams to promote her latest film, Big Eyes, and do a victory lap after her impressive Saturday Night Live hosting duty, but instead we have yet another repercussion of the Sony hacking scandal.

Adams was reportedly in the Today show green room, ready to go on the air, when she was told she would be asked to comment on the Sony scandal. "Amy said she didn't want to contribute to the media coverage of it ... then she was abruptly told that her interview with Today was cancelled. She was shocked and upset," a source tells Page Six.

Another source, though, saw her as a bit more than "shocked and upset," claiming that Adams "was angry and acting belligerent, she was yelling at Today producers and reduced a young female staffer to tears." Guess she did learn a thing or two from working with David O. Russell after all.

Probably the most entertaining part of all of this is the NBC spokesperson's statement explaining that "as a news program, the Today show doesn't allow guests to put restrictions on interviews."

Oh man. First of all, that's total bull. And second of all, it's so cute that you think of yourself as a news program. Adorable.

Berlin fest won't let Fifty Shades wear out welcome

In a move that kind of makes Germany's prestigious Berlinale seem kind of desperate, Fifty Shades of Grey will be celebrating its international premiere at the 65th annual edition of the film festival, programmers announced this week. The press release even goes so far as to call the roles of Christian Grey (Jamie Dornan) and Anastasia Steel (Dakota Johnson) "iconic."

Guys, come on. This is soft-core S&M porn originally written as fan fiction for Twilight, an already pretty terrible book series.

The festival also announced they'll be screening the film only once, meaning either they're really trying to build up excitement around it or they're secretly embarrassed about screening it at all. I'm going with the latter.

Jamie Dornan GETTY IMAGES

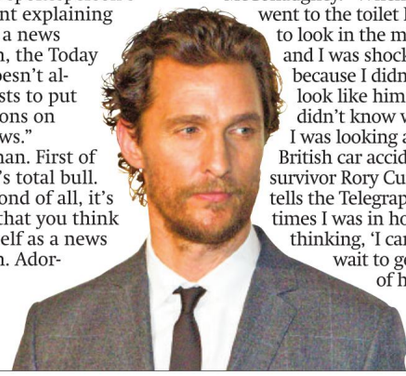
Dakota Johnson GETTY IMAGES

Alright, alright, aw shucks! Man wakes from coma thinking he's McConaughey

You think you know what disappointment feels like? Try being the British man who came out of a six-day coma in 2012 thinking he was Matthew McConaughey. "When I went to the toilet I went to look in the mirror and I was shocked because I didn't look like him, I didn't know what I was looking at," British car accident survivor Rory Curtis tells the Telegraph. "At times I was in hospital thinking, 'I can't wait to get out of here and back to filming movies.' I was convinced I was him and that I had his good looks as well. I know it was hopeful thinking, really." Yeah, but just imagine how bummed he'd be if this had happened after McConaughey's Oscar win.

Also, Curtis says he came out of the coma speaking fluent French, a language that he'd never studied and that, to my knowledge, McConaughey doesn't speak either.

"I was sitting there spouting a foreign language from my hospital bed, acting all French in their sort of arrogant yet sophisticated way," he says. Sounds charming.



Matthew McConaughey GETTY IMAGES

Photos: Elsa and Anna CONTRIBUTED

Virgo hopes fans come 'along for the ride'

Miniseries. Book of Negroes director talks search for lead actress, challenge of story spanning decades

HALEY RYAN
Metro in Halifax

Clement Virgo wasn't sure he even wanted to read the Book of Negroes.

Virgo, who directed and co-wrote the miniseries of the same name alongside author Lawrence Hill, said it was hard to get past the title before he realized it was referencing a real document that listed the names of black people who helped the British in the Revolutionary War.

"What brought me to the story is the main character, Aminata Diallo," the Canadian director said in an interview from Toronto. "She's a terrific heroine and her voice and her journey really … made me want to spend four years trying to bring her to the screen."

His "number one challenge" was finding someone who had the right acting chops, could embody Aminata's vulnerability and strength while playing both young and old — and he enjoy could spending nearly every scene with, Virgo said.

"Once we found Aunjanue Ellis … I was quite relieved," he said.

Although the book was released as Someone Knows My Name in the United States where there has been a more "turbulent history" around race, Virgo said the miniseries will air as the Book of Negroes on BET and the title should be a "non-issue" once people know its historical roots.

Although the book was originally supposed to be turned into a feature film, Virgo said some of the most "visually interesting" work right now is on TV, and the book's dense material fits better in a miniseries than crammed into a movie.

Working with Hill in adapting the book was easy because he was "not precious" about his novel and was open to compressing some aspects of the book while keeping it historically accurate, Virgo said.

Clement Virgo on the set of his miniseries, which begins airing Jan. 7 on CBC Television. JEFF HARPER/METRO

Virgo said he tried to focus on what he felt was important to the story and making Hill happy, while forgetting about fans of the book "looking over my shoulder.

"I was just trying to be truthful, and emotionally engaged, and hopefully they'll come along for the ride," he said.

The "genius" of Hill's story is how he thrust a Forrest Gump-like character into the history of slavery, the American Revolution, segregated settlements in Nova Scotia, and the journey back to Africa without it seeming like a lecture, Virgo said.

As Canadians watch the series, Virgo said he hopes they realize no matter where you come from, or who you are, you can overcome anything life throws at you.

"That's what Aminata represents; perseverance and resilience in the face of a lot of hardship," he said.

The reel deal

"It's a very factual story that is moving."

Director Clement Virgo
on The Book of Negroes

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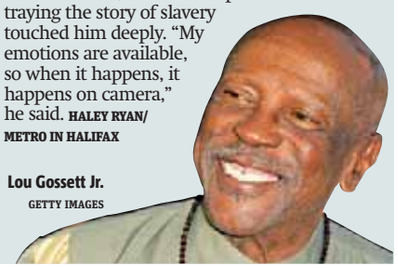
Getting into character

Lou Gossett Jr. on the strong spirit of Daddy Moses

Like his character's biblical namesake, Lou Gossett Jr. leads his people out of hardship and across the ocean to find their homeland by keeping up hope. Gossett, an American actor whose career spans five decades and includes An Officer and A Gentleman and the TV series Roots, plays preacher Daddy Moses in the Book of Negroes miniseries.

"I'm drawn to his spirit," Gossett said with a warm smile on the film set in Shelburne, N.S. "Faith is tested at its most when things are tough. That's how you grow."

Gossett said he didn't know the story before reading the script but has done book adaptations before, and appreciates "the challenge." Although Daddy Moses has a sense of humour and there are many light moments in the miniseries, Gossett said portraying the story of slavery touched him deeply. "My emotions are available, so when it happens, it happens on camera," he said. HALEY RYAN/METRO IN HALIFAX



Lou Gossett Jr. GETTY IMAGES

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Joshua Jackson's never had it so Golden

Television. The Affair star is grateful for a cable schedule that gives him time to live his life

NED EHRBAR
Metro in Hollywood

Joshua Jackson's latest show, The Affair, wrapped up its first 10-episode season Sunday night, but despite the series' success and critical acclaim — including three Golden Globe nominations — he understands if you still think of other work he's done when you see him.

"Depending on where you are in the world, Pacey left a mark, and I'm 36 years old now. That's a long time ago," Jackson says of his breakout Dawson's Creek role.

"Frankly even before that, (there was) The Mighty Ducks. Maybe not in the rest of the world, but for Canada, I still walk around as the bearded old man that I am now and have nine-year-olds who are like, 'Charlie! Oh my God, what's going on?'"

It may seem jarring to hear a 36-year-old call himself an old man — and Jackson mentions his age often enough to suggest it's on his mind a lot — but keep in mind his first Mighty Ducks film came out nearly 23 years ago. And Dawson's Creek? Just celebrated its 16th birthday.

"I look back on those years very fondly, and obviously that was a life-changing event for me. I was already a working actor, but now it was a career arc rather than something that I was a doing when I was a kid," he says. "Yes, I do feel old sometimes."

But with age comes wisdom, and for Jackson the 10-episode structure of The Affair — and the cable landscape in general — was a revelation.

"As a man who's done a lot of seasons of television and frankly just been working for a long, long time — I mean, this is my 25th year in the union, I can't believe that's true, but it's true — what is so lovely about doing 10 episodes is that just at the point which you're tired and you want the season to be done, it's done and then you can go out and live the rest of your life," he says.

Joshua Jackson stars in The Affair airing on The Movie Network and Movie Central. CONTRIBUTED

So what does living the rest of his life look like these days?

"Well, right now I'm building a house. Diane and I are building a house so I am a foreman on a construction site," he says, name-checking longtime girlfriend Diane Kruger.

"The woman is key. Truly, I mean I've been with Diane now for eight-and-a-half years, and the process of being in love and accommodating another human being in your space is important. This is the thing that I've learned that I enjoy most about being in love and having a partner is having somebody who shares your story for better and for worse, right? Somebody who has been there through all the moments: the ups, the downs, the sideways, the boring moments, the exciting moments."

Building on a relationship

"This is the thing that I've learned that I enjoy most about being in love and having a partner is having somebody who shares your story for better and for worse, right? Somebody who has been there through all the moments: the ups, the downs, the sideways, the boring moments, the exciting moments."

Joshua Jackson

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Repaired relationship working famously well

Television. David Arquette talks friendship with Courteney Cox and Celebrity Name Game

Exes David Arquette and Courteney Cox seem to have hit a sweet spot in their personal and professional relationships.

Working together as parents, actors and business partners with Coquette Productions, which recently launched Celebrity Name Game on GameTV in Canada, Arquette says they've "hit such a stride" where they "just really help each other."

"First and foremost, we are friends and we love each other," says Arquette. "We're incredible co-parents, she's a wonderful mother, we love our daughter and we just want a healthy relationship for that, in general.

"But as far as Coquette goes, we've been developing this production company for over 10 years, so it's something we've invested a lot of time and energy in. It's something we get a lot of joy out of. So to just throw it away is a waste — on top of the fact that we really work together really well."

Through Coquette Productions, they've also developed projects including the series Cougar Town and Dirt and the upcoming film Just Before I Go, which Cox directed. The company also has a development deal at ABC Studios.

"We respect each other. We enhance each other's skill sets," says Arquette, 43. "We seldom ever have any kind of conflict. ... The greatest part is that when we get on a set that's a really fun set, that our daughter is there and she sees her parents interacting and caring for each other and having fun and being productive and creative.

"It's just a good lesson all around."

Airing nightly at 7:30 p.m. ET, Celebrity Name Game is a half-hour series that pairs well-known personalities with contestants in order to identify famous names based on improvised clues. Craig Ferguson hosts the comical show, which unfolds over four rounds and offers contestants the chance to win $20,000.

Celebrity guest stars include Cox, Arquette, Emmanuelle Chriqui, Sheryl Crow, Mario Lopez, Tom Arnold, Lisa Kudrow and Kevin McHale.

"It's hard," says Arquette. "When you get in front of the audience and there's a ticking clock, you'd be surprised at how your brain just goes blank sometimes."

Game shows and board games have been a big part of Arquette's life.

As a child, he didn't live near his grandfather, actor-comedian Cliff Arquette, so he watched him on the game show Hollywood Squares in order to feel connected.

"We lived across the country and I was really young, but it was one of the ways I got to know him," he says "I was only three or four or something and I'd be able to watch him on television, and I loved the show and I loved the humour and I loved the entertainment element.

"So it had always been something we loved, and my father was an improvisational actor, so we did a lot of improv games, like Charades or Freeze."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

History of him and her

- Arquette and Cox announced their split in 2010 and finalized their divorce in May 2013 after nearly 14 years of marriage. They have a 10-year-old daughter named Coco and have appeared onscreen together in projects including the Scream horror films.

From his wrestling days in the early 2000s to his stints as a graffiti artist and a breakdancer, Arquette says he likes "just having fun, going out there and being silly." GETTY

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In theatres Christmas Day

Ratings and synopses courtesy of Rotten Tomatoes. For more movie reviews, trailers and news go to RottenTomatoes.com.

Ratings: *Certified Fresh:* *Fresh:* *Rotten:* *Audience response:* *Audience anticipation for the film:* +

Drama

Mr. Turner

Director. Mike Leigh

Stars. Timothy Spall, Paul Jesson

This film explores the last quarter century of the great, if eccentric, British painter J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851). Profoundly affected by the death of his father, loved by a housekeeper whom he both takes for granted and occasionally exploits for sex, he forms a relationship with a seaside landlady with whom he eventually lives incognito in Chelsea, where he dies.

Rotten Tomatoes™ score
Critics: 98% **Audience:** 90%

Kids/Family

Into the Woods

Director. Sean Anders

Stars. Meryl Streep, Emily Blunt, James Corden

Into the Woods is a modern twist on several of the beloved Brothers Grimm fairy tales, intertwining the plots of a few choice stories and exploring the consequences of the characters' wishes and quests. This humorous and heartfelt musical follows the classic tales of Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk, and Rapunzel.

Rotten Tomatoes™ score
Critics: 71% **Audience:** + 97%

Drama

Big Eyes

Director. Tim Burton

Stars. Amy Adams, Christoph Waltz

Directed and produced by Tim Burton, Big Eyes is based on the true story of Walter Keane (Christoph Waltz), who was one of the most successful painters of the 1950s and early 1960s. The artist earned staggering notoriety by revolutionizing the commercialization and accessibility of popular art with his enigmatic paintings of waifs with big eyes.

Rotten Tomatoes™ score
Critics: 72% **Audience:** + 95%

Drama

Unbroken

Director. Angelina Jolie

Stars. Jack O'Connell, Domhnall Gleeson

Academy Award winner Angelina Jolie directs and produces Unbroken, following the incredible life of Olympian and war hero Louis "Louie" Zamperini (Jack O'Connell) who, along with two other crewmen, survived in a raft for 47 days after a near-fatal plane crash in the Second World War, only to be caught by the Japanese Navy and sent to a prisoner-of-war camp.

Rotten Tomatoes™ score
Critics: 48% **Audience:** + 96%

Mystery/Drama

Inherent Vice

Director. Paul Thomas Anderson

Stars. Joaquin Phoenix

Inherent Vice is the seventh feature from Paul Thomas Anderson and the first-ever film adaption of a Thomas Pynchon novel. When private eye Doc Sportello's ex-old lady suddenly shows up with a story about her current billionaire boyfriend, and a plot by his wife and her boyfriend to kidnap that billionaire and throw him in a looney bin... well, easy for her to say.

Rotten Tomatoes™ score
Critics: 71% **Audience:** + 94%

Mystery/Drama

The Gambler

Director. Rupert Wyatt

Stars. Mark Wahlberg

Jim Bennett (Mark Wahlberg) is a risk taker. Both an English professor and a high-stakes gambler, Bennett bets it all when he borrows from a gangster (Michael Kenneth Williams) and offers his own life as collateral. Always one step ahead, Bennett pits his creditor against the operator of a gambling ring (Alvin Ing) and leaves his dysfunctional relationship with his wealthy mother.

Rotten Tomatoes™ score
Critics: 62% **Audience:** + 94%

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The hot destinations of 2015

Make a list. Here's a rundown of accessible and fascinating trips to plan next year

The One World Trade observatory is expected to open in late spring 2015. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

See Cuba before it changes. Check out the World Expo in Milan. And if you're heading to New York City to see the view from One World Trade Center's observatory (scheduled to open late spring), take the subway to Queens and see if you can figure out why it topped Lonely Planet's "best in the U.S." destinations for 2015.

Europe

The Milan Expo opens in May for six months and is expected to draw 20 million visitors. The Expo is the modern incarnation of the old World's Fairs that thrilled 19th- and 20th-century guests with new products and technology.

The theme of the Milan Expo is food and nutrition, and dozens of countries are participating. The U.S. will do its part by sending six authentic food trucks to Italy featuring regional American and ethnic fusion menus. Milan's famous opera house, La Scala, normally closed in the summer, will host performances daily during the Expo.

Anniversaries

Singapore celebrates its golden Jubilee — 50 years of independence from Great Britain. Vietnam celebrates 70 years since achieving independence from France, and 50 years since the first U.S. combat troops arrived at Da Nang, which some historians say marked the start of the Vietnam War — even though Americans had been sent to the country in prior years.

A number of U.S. museums and historic sites will be hosting exhibits and events to mark 150 years since the assassination of Abraham Lincoln and the end of the Civil War.

The new year also marks 70 years since the end of Second World War — both the defeat of Nazi Germany and the atomic bombing of Japan that ended the war in Asia. Hiroshima and Nagasaki are planning memorial services on the August anniversaries of the bombings, along with numerous arts projects and peace-themed events throughout the year.

In New Orleans, Aug. 29 will be the 10-year anniversary of the devastation of hurricane Katrina. "Come see the new New Orleans" is the tourist industry mantra for showcasing trendy emerging neighbourhoods and a vibrant restaurant scene.

South Dakota expects crowds for the 50th Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup in September and the 75th Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in August.

Head over to South Dakota for the Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup in September. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cuba

The news that the U.S. intends to normalize relations with Cuba could lead to a rush of travellers hoping to experience the island before it loses its frozen-in-time culture to an onslaught of U.S. chain stores, hotels and tourists. But don't pack your bags just yet: For the near future, the only way you can legally visit Cuba as an American citizen is to take a "people to people" cultural exchange tour licensed by the U.S. government. The tours are expensive and itineraries are limited.

Theme Parks

Universal Studios Hollywood debuts two new attractions in 2015: Springfield, an immersive area opening in spring surrounding The Simpsons Ride, and Fast & Furious — Supercharged, a thrill ride opening in summer based on the film series.

Disneyland opens Frozen Fun in January in Anaheim, Calif., with a singalong, Olaf's Snow Fest, and meet-and-greets with Anna and Elsa, among other attractions. The California theme park also celebrates its 60th anniversary this year, with celebration details to be revealed at the end of January.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York City

Two big openings take place in the Big Apple in 2015: the observatory at One World Trade in late spring and the new Whitney Museum of American Art in May in Manhattan's Meatpacking District near the High Line and the Hudson River. The city also got a Christmas gift from Lonely Planet, which named the borough of Queens as a "best in the U.S." destination. Manhattan has been giving ground to trendy Brooklyn in recent years, but the elevation of Queens as the next big thing was a bit of a surprise. Not that New Yorkers and tourists alike don't love Queens attractions like the 1964 World's Fair grounds, the hipster beach scene in the Rockaways, Chinatown in Flushing, the Asian and Latin American ethnic mix in Jackson Heights and the emerging industrial-chic ambience of Long Island City. But the borough is not quite on tourist radars yet — though the Lonely Planet pronouncement may change that.

How to stop being afraid of the followup

Career. They've said they'd be in touch, but should you give them a shout in the meantime?

LAUREN MARINIGH
TalentEgg.ca

Knowing how to follow up after an interview can be key to determining if you progress on to the next step in the hiring process.

If you're not the most assertive person, you may be afraid to reach out post-interview. Here are some important steps to follow that can help make the process less intimidating.

Organize details

Often job descriptions will outline how or if they would like you to follow up.

Some jobs will state that only qualified applicants will be contacted, and will strictly outline not to follow up. Make sure you make note of these things as you are sending out applications. Once you have sent out a followup, make sure to make note of a response you receive. This will be crucial in knowing when to follow up again, or knowing the job status.

There is nothing worse than following up when you've already heard that a position is closed.

Follow up with the appropriate person

Just as when you apply for a job, it's important that your followup be directed to the right person.

If you applied to a general HR email, you can try following up to that email, but chances are you won't hear back.

Try to find the person in charge of hiring for that particular position. If you apply via LinkedIn, often you will be able to see who posted the job, and that will help identify the right person with whom to follow up.

Know the platform

How should you be following up?

If a position specifically states "No phone calls," follow up with an email.

Email is generally a safer and less invasive bet anyway, as it allows for the hiring manager to reply back in their own time — and avoids creating an awkward situation.

You don't want to catch someone off-guard or annoy them by not following instructions that were clearly laid out in the first place.

If you have a more casual relationship with someone involved in the hiring process (but not the key decision-maker), you may want to consider using a social media platform (like Twitter) to touch base with them.

Let it be and give it time

There is a fine line between following up and annoying human resources by being too persistent.

You'll definitely be contacted if you are a promising candidate, so imagine your followup as simply a confirmation of interest and an opportunity to (hopefully) gain more information about your application status in the process.

If you don't hear back from the hiring manager, don't take it personally.

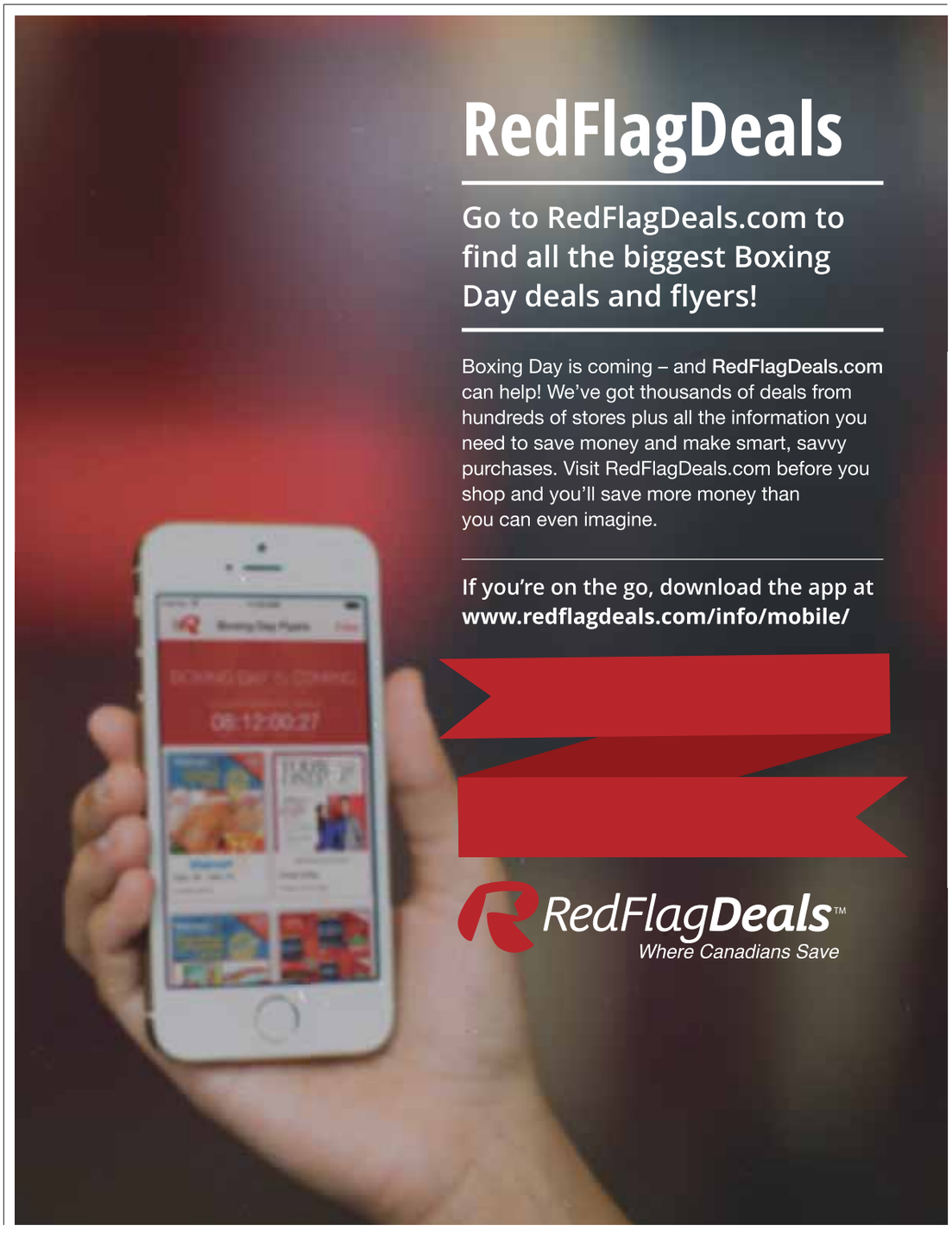
While you may be disappointed that your carefully-crafted application didn't get the response you wanted, letting go of your disappointment is the only way to move forward.

Refreshing your inbox repeatedly is only going to result in frustration. If the position is taken down and you still haven't heard back after a few weeks, it's safe to say they are not interested. ISTOCK

Send the right message

Not knowing what to share in a followup message is a common reason for opting out.

- Don't overthink it. If you're following up on an application, keep your message brief and inquire politely about the opportunity you've applied to. Reiterate your interest and ask if there have been any new developments in the hiring process.



Bacon the icing on baked apple pancake

Christmas brunch.
Bacon-apple upside-down pancake delivers a crowd-pleasing salty caramelized crunch

Like Thanksgiving, Christmas is one of those holidays that requires aroma.

On Thanksgiving, we need the house to smell of turkey and stuffing and sweet potatoes. On Christmas, we need whiffs of indulgent breakfast items, like cinnamon rolls or a bubbling fruit crisp. Or maybe you prefer hash browns and bacon. Those get the job done nicely, too.

This year combine sweet and savoury with this baked pancake inspired by an upside-down cake. For ease, it can partially prepped the night before. To do that, just make the batter as directed in a blender, then refrigerate it overnight in the blender carafe. In the morning, just give it a quick whir to freshen it, then you're ready to assemble the pancake.

This recipe serves 4. MATTHEW MEAD/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

And that's when things get good. You start by frying bacon in a skillet. Once the bacon is crisp, you top it with a layer of thinly sliced apples. Give those a couple minutes to soften, then you add a hefty sprinkle of brown sugar and cinnamon. Finally, you pour on the batter and pop the whole thing in the oven to finish.

When it's done, you overturn the pancake onto a serving platter and cut it into wedges. You may not need to, but there's no harm in dousing the whole thing with maple syrup.

Ingredients

- 3/4 cup whole milk
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon canola or vegetable oil
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- Kosher salt
- 1 large apple
- 8 strips bacon
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

1. Heat the oven to 375 F.

2. In a blender, combine the milk, egg, oil and vanilla. Blender until smooth.

3. With the blender running on low, sprinkle in the flour, sugar, baking powder and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Stop blending as soon as the mixture is smooth. Set aside.

4. Use an apple corer or melon baller to core the apple, but leave the fruit intact. Set the apple on its side, then cut it into thin round slices. Set aside.

5. Heat a large oven-safe skillet over medium. Add the bacon and cook for 6 to 7 minutes on one side. Spoon out and discard about half of the fat in the pan, then turn the bacon strips to cook on the other side, laying them flat and evenly over the bottom of the pan.

6. Top the bacon with the apple slices, arranging them evenly. Cover the pan and cook for 2 minutes.

7. Mix together the brown sugar, cinnamon and a pinch of salt, then sprinkle the mixture over the apples.

8. Carefully and evenly pour the pancake batter over the apples and bacon. Place the skillet in the oven and bake until lightly browned and cooked through, about 20 minutes.

9. Let the pancake cool for 5 minutes. Use a paring knife to loosen the edges of the pancake, then overturn a large serving plate over the skillet. Invert the skillet to release the pancake onto the plate. Cut into wedges.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Leafs' top stars outshine opponents in shutout win

NHL. Kadri, Bozak, Kessel, van Riemsdyk all have multi-point games while Bernier sharp between pipes

On Tuesday

Maple Leafs	Stars
4	0

When it came time for the Maple Leafs to climb out of their pre-holiday rut, it was the team's best players leading the way.

Toronto picked up its 20th win of the season — not a bad pre-Christmas total — with a solid 4-0 win Tuesday night over the surging Dallas Stars.

That ended Toronto's three-game losing skid, sending some Christmas cheer to fretting fans.

It helped that the team's players did what they're paid to do, and for the top stars, that means score.

Nazem Kadri had a goal and assist; James van Riemsdyk had a goal and two assists, Tyler Bozak a power-play goal and Phil Kessel, two assists.

And goalie Jonathan Bernier, who stopped 43 shots, picked up another win, his quick glove and rebound control in full evidence. Mike Santorelli added an empty-netter with 3:51 to go as Dallas pulled out all the stops to try to get one past the Toronto netminder and break the shutout.

Kari Lehtonen made 22 saves in a losing effort.

The Leafs go into the holiday break with 43 points, good for fourth place in the Atlantic Division and a healthy margin as the first wild-card team in the Eastern Conference playoff race.

The Leafs (20-12-3) will resume their schedule on Sunday when they visit the Florida Panthers.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Maple Leafs goalie Jonathan Bernier makes a save in front of the Stars' Colton Sceviour on Tuesday night in Dallas. RONALD MARTINEZ/GETTY IMAGES

Raptors looking forward to rest over break

The Raptors' James Johnson is defended by the Bulls' Joakim Noah on Monday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Raptors fans can either be pumped up by, or face with trepidation, the impending post-Christmas road trip that represents the most arduous stretch of the schedule so far by a wide margin.

They can be excited about seeing how the Eastern Conference-leading Raptors fare against some of the top teams in the West, they can be anxious to see if the team can steal a game or two or three, they can talk about measuring sticks or statement games or what have you.

The players have a more singular focus in the days leading to the trip:

Getting some rest.

Now on their longest time away from the court since training camp began in late September, the next little while is about recuperation and rejuvenation.

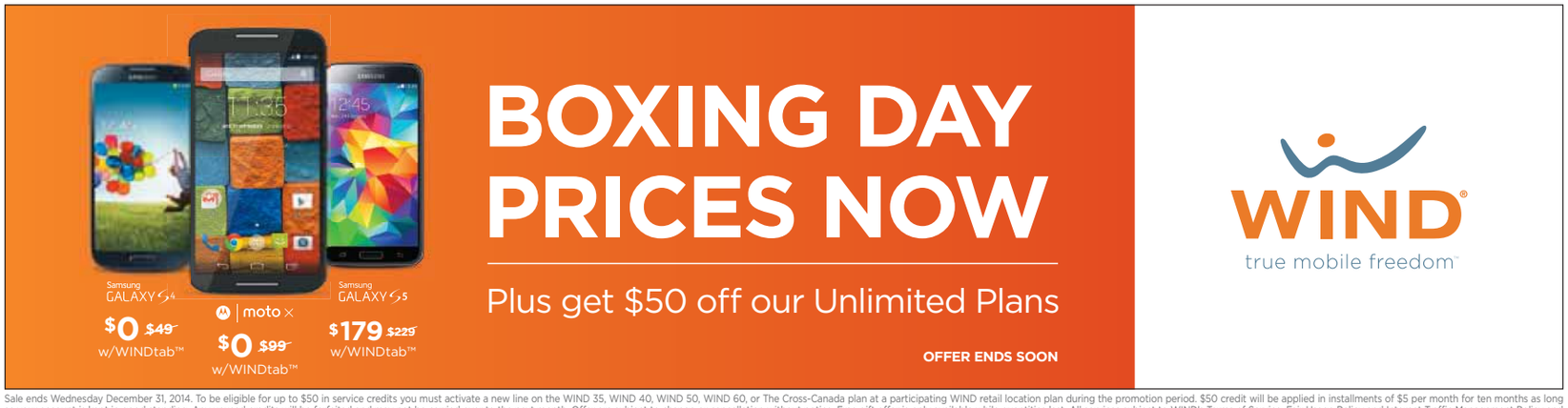
"That's going to be good to refresh your mind (and) especially (your) body," said centre Jonas Valanciunas after the Raptors went into the break on the heels of a 129-120 loss to the Chicago Bulls on Monday.

"To lay down a couple of days in a bed, just not do nothing. Refresh your body, refresh your mind and come back on (the) 27th ready to play and win some games."

The Raptors face the Clippers on Saturday before playing the thin air at Denver on Sunday. Portland's the next stop, the league-best Golden State Warriors will host the Raptors after Toronto will have spent three days over New Year's in San Francisco and the trip — forced on them by the presence of the world junior hockey championships at the Air Canada Centre — winds up in Phoenix on Jan. 4.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

4 SPORTS



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2015 Mazda MX-5

- **Type.** Two-door, rear-wheel-drive compact sports car
- **Engine.** 2.0-litre inline four cylinder (167 hp)
- **Transmissions.** Six-speed manual or automatic
- **Price.** $29,450 base (GX), $42,720 as-tested (anniversary edition)

Market position

Debuted in 1989 and continues to stick to original script of providing the most fun-to-drive roadster for the money. The Miata/MX-5 is the best-selling two-seat sports car in history and now has no direct competitors. It is a spiritual successor to traditional low-cost British roadsters, such as the MGB and TR6.

Points

- 2015 Anniversary Edition the last iteration of current generation. An all-new MX-5 is due out next year.
- The U.S. and Canada each received only 100 copies of the Anniversary Edition, which sold out quickly.
- The only exterior colour combination is Soul Red Mica/Brilliant Black — the latter for the retractable hardtop.

The cabin is tight but cosy, with miniature controls and little space.

Safety features

Stability and traction control, four-wheel disc brakes with anti-lock and electronic brake force distribution, limited slip differential, anti-theft alarm, engine immobilizer theft deterrent, front and side airbags, seat-belt pretensioners with force limiter, side impact door beams, fog lights, Xenon headlights.

Just don't mess with success

Review. With a new MX-5 on the horizon, let's hope Mazda sticks with its Miata formula for fun and affordability

MIKE GOETZ
drive@metronews.ca

PHOTOS: MIKE GOETZ

Nobody rocks the concept of a fun and affordable two-seat roadster quite like Mazda. Then again, nobody else really tries anymore.

And who could blame them? Why invest in a separate platform, which is hard to share with other vehicles, for a shrinking pool of buyers?

These cars don't exude the prestige they used to in North America and Europe, as crossovers continue their unrelenting path to complete vehicle domination. And there isn't much demand for them in China and other emerging markets, perhaps defeated by concerns about the weather, traffic and pollution, and a preference among the rich to be chauffeured rather than drive themselves around.

All of which makes the MX-5 even more precious to those of us who still enjoy driving. From its inception in 1990, the Miata was conceived as a car to provide the most driving joy per dollar, by keeping engine size and power in check, and concentrating on lightness, balance, driver feedback and simplicity.

And although the car was renamed the MX-5 in 2006, Mazda hasn't strayed from the script since, including the all-new 2016 MX-5, which is waiting in the wings.

Compared to most everything else on the road, the Miata/MX-5 is a small and precise gem. And the 25th-anniversary edition is even more gem-like, with some elegant cosmetic touches, and a knock-out Soul Red Micra paint job.

With just 100 anniversary editions available in Canada, they sold out months ago, but you can still buy the equally impressive 2014 GT model.

The MX-5 offers very light and agile handling. The 2.0-litre four-cylinder engine likes to rev, but takes premium fuel. Its 167 horsepower are not overwhelming, but everything feels faster when you're this low and connected to the pavement. And the manual gearbox is one of the most satisfying to use in autodom.

The ride is not as stiff as you might expect, because it doesn't need a stiff suspension for handling, but it is a bit noisy on the highway.

The cabin is tight, but cosy, with miniature controls and little storage space. Your legs go straight out, with no bend to the knee.

Net result: The MX-5 is one very fine, two-seat, convertible sports car.

Compare

1 BMW Z4
Base price: $56,395
Good looking and powerful, but not visceral.

2 Porsche Boxster
Base price: $59,685
Good looking and powerful, and very visceral.

3 Nissan 370Z Roadster
Base price: $51,238
Excellent bits don't seem to add up to an engaging experience.

DRIVE

Santa needs a new set of wheels

Sleighs and reindeer are so eight centuries ago. It's time for the big guy in the red suit to swap his drafty open-air ride for something a little more comfortable and inconspicuous to pilot during his annual chimney spelunking marathon

MIKE DOJC
drive@metronews.ca

So long, Rudolph. A saintly SUV, an elfish EV or maybe Nick the Ninja

Okay, so maybe this vintage Mini Cooper isn't quite the right fit for a jolly old fellow with a belly full of jelly.

Especially when his most important drive is an annual trip around the world loaded down with millions of toys and presents for good girls and boys.

But, hey, after being stuck behind the reins of a boring old sleigh pulled by eight tiny reindeer for more than 800 years, you can hardly blame a guy for dreaming of something a little bit hotter and a whole lot more comfy.

So here are a few suggestions for Santa's next ride, should Mrs. Claus and the elves be looking for something special to surprise him with under the tree this year.

Toyota Tundra

Steady and refined, even on the Arctic's roughest roads, this massive pickup is unmatched when it comes to hauling presents or towing your favourite toys.

It may weigh in at a half ton but it packs up to 310 horses so there's no need for eight scrawny reindeer.

The Double and CrewMax Cab versions have seating for up to six humans (or a dozen elves).

There's even a trio of rouge-toned paint jobs to choose from: Radiant Red, Barcelona Red Metallic and, Santa's favourite, Inferno.

Hyundai Santa Fe Sport

This affordable and agile SUV seems perfectly built to spread yuletide cheer.

It has creature comfort options galore — from heated second-row seats and dual climate-control zone to Hillstart Assist Control, which nips backward roll in the bud.

Resourceful elves can stow a neighbourhood's worth of Christmas gifts inside by folding down the second row of seats to create 2,025 litres of cargo space.

And the cabin is so roomy Santa can help himself to an extra helping of milk and cookies before making his rounds.

Kawasaki Ninja H2

What, you think a 998-cc supercharged sport bike — the street-legal version of the 300-hp H2R — is too intense a crotch rocket for Santa's britches?

Nah, Ole St. Nick is a speed demon from way back. And complementing the growl of this high-performance engine with a baritone "Ho, Ho, Ho" would really rev up the Christmas spirit. Besides, the vibrant green trellis frame creates a mistletoe motion blur.

Mercedes GLA45 AMG

This 2015 newbie will turn as many heads as Rudolph's ruby red nose.

Its 355-horsepower twin-scroll turbo-charged four-cylinder engine, with 332 lb.-ft. of torque, not only has the requisite pep and muscle to cart Santa's portly frame around town. It also can get off to the races in a jiffy — going zero to 96 km/h in 4.8 seconds.

All that power could get mere mortals into trouble but this is the Kris Kringle-ator we're talking about.

Nissan Leaf

As a North Pole resident, the effects of global warming keep Santa up at night longer than the nauseating length of this year's naughty list.

The Leaf, one of the first 100 per cent electric cars to be widely available on the market, may be a snug fit for Santa's bowl-full-of-jelly waistline, but the man in red is determined to go green for the holidays.

"This compact EV is even easier to park than Blitzen," raves Mrs. Claus, who does most of the driving the rest of the year.

YEAR END COUNTDOWN

TOYOTA *On the Park*

THE DAY AFTER BOXING DAY EVENT

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 27TH

0% INTEREST RATES

$86

$7500 IN CASH REBATES

$135

OVER 300 NEW AND USED VEHICLES TO CHOOSE FROM

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Corolla CE, Semi-monthly lease for 60 months with $1000 down payment. Includes freight and fees, HST extra. 2015 Rav4 FWD LE, Semi-monthly lease @ 2.99% for 60 months with $1000 down payment. Includes freight and fees, HST extra. 2015 Sienna CE, Semi-monthly lease @ 3.99% for 60 months, with $3000 down payment. Includes freight and fees, HST extra. 0% interest is available on the 2014 Matrix and Venza for up to 60 months only. $7500 rebates applies to 2014 Tundra Crewmax model only, cash purchase only. Free winter tire promotion applies to tires only, does not include wheels or tire pressure sensors. 2 Year free maintenance promotion applies to the first 6 scheduled services as per the Toyota Canada maintenance schedule only. Free rust proofing applies to rust proof only and does not include any warranty.

BOXING DAY

SATURDAY
DECEMBER 27TH
9AM - 6PM

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There's nothing cuckoo about coconut coir

Driving Force. Fibres found between the shell and the nut is used for many things, including soaking up oil spills

JIL MCINTOSH
drive@metronews.ca

By their very nature, cars and trucks present numerous environmental issues, and not just because of what comes out of their tailpipes.

When something goes wrong and fluids leak out of a vehicle, mechanics and emergency responders usually sop up the mess with several different types of absorbent products that can have environmental issues of their own.

"The most common products are made from clay or diatomaceous earth," says Toby Wilson, president of Coco Products, which makes a more environment-friendly product called Coco Absorb from coconut fibre. "Clay products are mined out of the ground, and they're not renewable. Plus, clay can catch fire when it comes into contact with vegetable oil and will spontaneously combust. We're seeing a lot more of that with biodiesel.

"And if perlite (a type of soft volcanic glass) comes in contact with hydrochloric acid, it will create deadly fumes," he adds. "Our product is not reactive to anything out there."

Coco Absorb is made from coconut pith, also known as coir, which is found between the coconut's hard green outer shell and the familiar dark-brown nut inside. Although it was originally just thrown away, coconut coir is now used in many different ways, including in gardening as a soil amendment or pressed into seedling pots, woven into rope, as insulation and, in some countries, burned as fuel.

It's also used in upholstery. Some auto manufacturers use coir in their seats, and they're experimenting with it as a possible ingredient in lightweight plastics and other materials.

The coir's honeycomb-like structure consists of narrow, hollow cells, which absorb fluids. Unlike most absorbents, which mainly draw fluids into their outermost layers, the coconut pith uses capillary action to act like a sponge and draw liquids inside. It also holds them there, even as it dries, so it doesn't leach potentially toxic fluids after disposal.

One of coir's best features is that, due to a naturally occurring chemical compound called phenol, it bonds with oil first, and can absorb several times its weight. Once it's completely saturated with oil, it won't absorb water.

Coconut coir could therefore be used to contain and absorb oil spills with minimal environmental damage, sopping up the oil while leaving the clean water behind. Even when left there, the oil-soaked coir won't release any of it back into the water.

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Dealers are free to set individual prices. Quantities limited; dealer order or trade may be required. Limited time offers which may not be combined with other offers. GMCL may modify, extend or terminate offers, in whole or in part, at any time without notice. Conditions and limitations apply. See dealer for details. ΔEPA estimated. ††2015 Malibu 1LZ, MSRP with freight, PDI & levies: $34,894. Dealers are free to set individual prices. **The 2 year Scheduled Lube-Oil-Filter Maintenance Program provides eligible customers in Canada, who have purchased, leased or financed a new eligible 2014MY Chevrolet, Buick or GMC vehicle (excluding Spark EV), with an ACDelco oil and filter change, in accordance with the oil life monitoring system and the Owner's Manual, for 2 years or 40,000 km, whichever occurs first, with a limit of four (4) Lube-Oil-Filter services in total, performed at participating GM Dealers. 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See your retailer for complete details. •$1,000 Bonus Cash Discount includes $500 Holiday Bonus Cash and $500 Boxing Week Cash. $500 Boxing Week Bonus Cash is available on select new 2014/2015 Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge or Ram models at participating retailers from December 19-31, 2014 only. Excludes 2014 Chrysler 200 LX, 2015 Chrysler 200, 2014 Dodge Avenger LE, 2015 Jeep Renegade, 2014/2015 Dodge Grand Caravan and Journey Canada Value Package, Dodge Dart, Jeep Wrangler Sport, Jeep Patriot, Jeep Compass, Jeep Cherokee, Ram Cargo Van, Ram 1500 Regular Cab, ProMaster and all FIAT models. $500 Holiday Bonus Cash is available on select new 2015 Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge, Ram or FIAT models at participating retailers from December 2-31, 2014 only. Excludes 2015 Jeep Patriot/2015 Dodge Grand Caravan Canada Value Package/2015 Dodge Journey Canada Value Package. Bonus Cash will be deducted from the negotiated purchase/lease price after taxes. Offer available at participating retailers. See retailer for complete details and exclusions. ★The Make No Payments for 90 Days event is a limited time offer which applies to retail customers who finance a new 2014/2015 Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge, Ram or FIAT vehicle (except 2014 Dodge Avenger SE and 2014/2015 Dodge Viper) at a special fixed rate on approved credit through Royal Bank of Canada, TD Auto Finance or Scotiabank. Offer does not apply to Scotiabank special rate financing contracts longer than 90 months. Monthly/bi-weekly/weekly payments will be deferred for 60 days and contracts will be extended accordingly. Interest charges will not accrue during the first 60 days of the contract. Customers will be responsible for any required down payment, license, registration and insurance costs at time of contract. Some conditions apply. 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Limit one $1,500 bonus cash offer per eligible truck transaction. Some conditions apply. See your retailer for complete details. *Consumer Cash Discounts are deducted from the negotiated price before taxes. ‡3.99% purchase financing for up to 96 months available on new select models through RBC, Scotiabank and TD Auto Finance. Retailer order/trade may be necessary. Example: 2015 Dodge Grand Caravan Canada Value Package (29E) with a Purchase Price of $19,995 with a $0 down payment, financed at 3.99% for 96 months equals 208 bi-weekly payments of $112 with a cost of borrowing of $3,394 and a total obligation of $23,388.63. †0% purchase financing for up to 36 months available on select new 2015 models to qualified customers on approved credit through RBC, Scotiabank and TD Auto Finance. Retailer order/trade may be necessary. Example: 2015 Jeep Cherokee Sport (24A) with a Purchase Price of $23,995 with a $0 down payment, financed at 0% for 36 months equals 78 bi-weekly payments of $308 with a cost of borrowing of $0 and a total obligation of $23,995. ◆4.99% lease financing of up to 60 months available on approved credit through WS Leasing Ltd. (a wholly owned subsidiary of Westminster Savings Credit Union) to qualified customers on applicable new 2013, 2014 and 2015 models at participating retailers in Ontario, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Retailer order/trade may be necessary. Example: 2015 Jeep Grand Cherokee Laredo (23E) with a Purchase Price of $35,902 leased at 4.99% over 60 months with $3,399 down payment, equals 260 weekly payments of $95.15 with a cost of borrowing of $6,458 and a total obligation of $28,160.60. 22,000 kilometre/year allowance. Charge of $0.18 per excess kilometre. Some conditions apply. ≤$2,500 Lease Cash available on the 2015 Jeep Grand Cherokee Laredo (23E). Lease Cash is deducted from the negotiated lease price before taxes. ≈Non-prime financing available on approved credit. APR example: 2014 Ram 1500 SXT 4x4 with a Purchase Price of $26,095 financed at 4.99% over 84 months, equals 182 bi-weekly payments of $170 for a total finance obligation of $30,970.95. §Starting From Prices for vehicles shown include Consumer Cash Discounts and do not include upgrades (e.g., paint). Upgrades available for additional cost. ∞Based on 2014 *Ward's* Middle Cross Utility segmentation. ☬Jeep Grand Cherokee has received more awards over its lifetime than any other SUV. ™The SiriusXM logo is a registered trademark of SiriusXM Satellite Radio Inc. ®Jeep is a registered trademark used under license by Chrysler Canada Inc.

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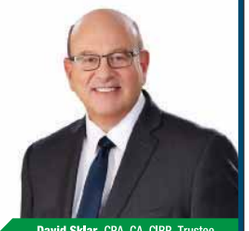
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AUGMENTED REALITY

Stuck on 12 Across? Scan this image with your Metro News app for today's crossword and Sudoku answers. It's OK. No one's watching.

metro AR

→ See the full instructions on Metro's Voices page.

Horoscopes by Sally Brompton

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
Someone will turn to you and you won't let them down. You like few things better than charging to the rescue, especially when backing the underdog against a bully.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
A colleague will make you an offer you find hard to refuse today, but can you trust them? Find out if it is genuine and, if it is, let them know quickly you want in on the game.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
There will be some remarkable developments in the final days of the year but conserve your energy. The less you do now the more you will gain later on.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
Someone will try to pressure you into justifying what you are doing. Do what feels right to you and, if others don't like it, that's just too bad.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
Try to build bridges to people you don't always get along with. Just because you have different outlooks does not mean you cannot be friends.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Don't worry if you have fallen out with a loved one. A few days from now you will be the best of friends again, so don't take it personally if they don't seem to care. They do really.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Make time for family members and make sure they know how much you love them. It won't hurt to be a bit more emotionally expressive.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
According to your solar chart this is a good day for doing nothing much, so sit back, relax and let life come to you.

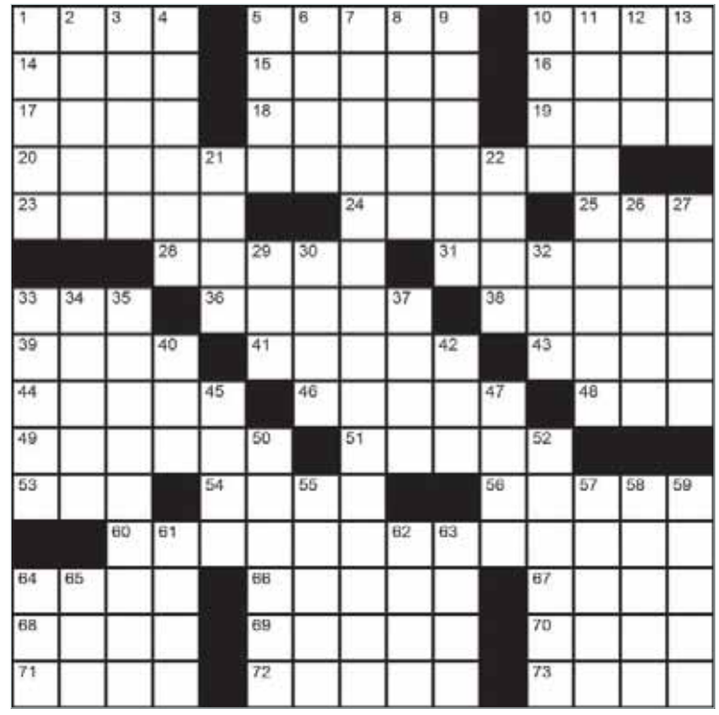
♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Deep down you are a big softie and what happens today will prove it. Someone who needs a helping hand will have much to thank you for. It could be the start of a beautiful friendship.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
For best results you should try to be on the move today. If you stay in the same place you could miss out on something special. Get moving and see where fate takes you.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Make the most of Mars in your sign to try something new and maybe take a few risks. You have always been the adventurous sort and now you are determined to show you have absolutely no fear.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Yake life at a sensible pace, especially if you are hosting friends and family over the holiday period. Don't try to do everything yourself.

Crossword: Canada Across and Down by Kelly Ann Buchanan



Across
1. Herd baby
5. Pointer
10. Hurt
14. Spoken
15. "Silver Bells" bit: "Children laughing / People passing / Meeting __ after..."
16. Christmastime 'pet'
17. Ms. Suvari
18. Reindeers' sniffers
19. "God __ Ye Merry, Gentlemen"
20. "On the seventh day of Christmas / My true love gave to me / Seven __ __ __..." - Bob & Doug McKenzie, "12 Days of Christmas"
23. "Silent Night": "__ in heavenly peace."
24. "Let It Snow": "But the __ is so delightful."
25. Mr. Capote, shortly
28. Christmas star
31. Court game
33. Got [abbr.]
36. Rudolph's straps
38. Terre-__ (Newfoundland)
39. "__! The Herald Angels Sing"
41. Principle
43. 'Game' suffix
44. Cookies left for #28-Across, perhaps
46. Tint-to-hair appliers
48. Jr.s' fathers
49. Reindeer crew member
51. Threshold
53. Ands: French
54. Bellow!
56. Fragrance
60. Gift disguiser: 2 wds.
64. "__ in a Manger"
66. Bird of Jove
67. Roman emperor
68. Ms. Gilbert
69. Mythological blood
70. Mr. Kringle
71. Religious song
72. __ __. (Food packaging meas.)
73. Fully satisfy

Down
1. Free passes, briefly
2. "It's been _ __ pleasure."
3. Mr. Bass
4. Snowy droplets
5. __ __ other (Without equals)
6. "__ __ two minds..."
7. "Jingle Bells": "A day or two ago / I thought I'd take a ride / And soon __ __ __ / Was seated by my side."
8. Fragrant resin
9. Skiing locale
10. Churchyard = God's __
11. They're roasting in the famous Christmas carol
12. G'days
13. Dine
21. Box
22. Eager
26. Christmastime tune by Joni Mitchell
27. Device operators
29. Mesh
30. Linked
32. Belonging to Omaha's li'l state
33. Providence, __ Island
34. Jeweller's unit, variantly
35. Wear a toque, scarf, parka and gloves: 2 wds.
37. Visionary
40. __-i-Noor Diamond
42. Prefix with 'cycle'
45. Evening, in Italy
47. Period of cold weather
50. Corral: 2 wds.
52. "Christmas with the __" (2004)
55. Speedily
57. Classical show
58. Virtue
59. Came about
61. Mr. Gosling
62. Sugar substitute, Sweet'_ __
63. Actor Mr. Frobe
64. Fireplace stuff
65. Method

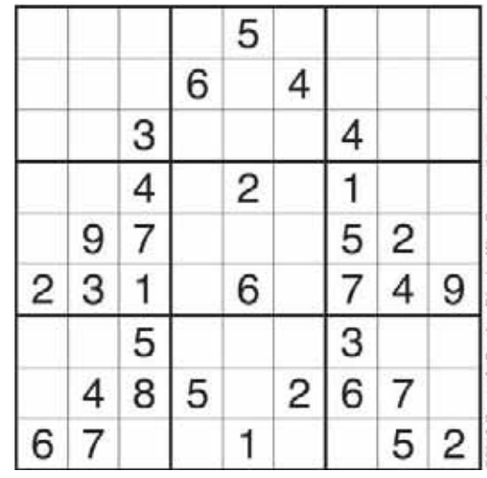
Yesterday's Crossword

Online

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.



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Yesterday's Sudoku

1	2	6	4	3	9	5	7	8
7	9	3	2	5	8	6	4	1
4	8	5	1	7	6	2	3	9
3	7	4	6	9	5	1	8	2
9	1	2	3	8	4	7	5	6
6	5	8	7	1	2	4	9	3
2	6	9	8	4	7	3	1	5
5	3	7	9	6	1	8	2	4
8	4	1	5	2	3	9	6	7

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WINTERFEST

DON'T PAY *until* NEXT YEAR[1]

ON ALL 2015 FINANCING OFFERS

+ 0% FINANCING UP TO 84 MONTHS

OR

UP TO $6,000[2] CASH BONUS ON SELECT 2014 MODELS

INCLUDES $500 LIMITED TIME BONUS

OR CHOOSE GREAT CASH OFFERS

CASH PURCHASE PRICE FROM $23,794[3] INCLUDING $5,000 IN CASH CREDIT[4]

Sorento EX shown[5] Cash purchase price $33,494
hwy / city 100km[6] : 9.0L/12.7L

2015 SORENTO LX AT

Offer includes delivery, destination, fees and a $5,000 cash credit[4]. Offer based on new 2015 Sorento LX AT (SR75BF) with a selling price of $28,794. Excludes HST.

CASH PURCHASE PRICE FROM $12,999[3] INCLUDING $4,515 IN CASH CREDIT[4]

Forte SX shown[5] Cash purchase price $26,814
hwy / city 100km[6] : 5.3L/8.0L

2015 FORTE LX MT

Offer includes delivery, destination, fees, a $4,500 cash credit and a $15 dealer contribution[4]. Offer based on new 2015 Forte LX MT (F0541F) with a selling price of $17,514. Excludes HST.

CASH PURCHASE PRICE FROM $11,999[3] INCLUDING $3,615 IN CASH CREDIT[4]

Rio4 SX with Navigation shown[5] Cash purchase price $22,514
hwy / city 100km[6] : 5.3L/7.3L

2015 RIO LX MT

Offer includes delivery, destination, fees, a $3,600 cash credit and a $15 dealer contribution[4]. Offer based on new 2015 Rio LX MT (RO541F) with a selling price of $15,614. Excludes HST.

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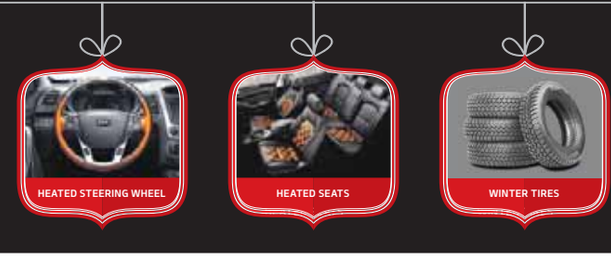

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